

. . . Vermont Entrants Will Comprise 10 Percent Of Entire Field

Senator Patrick Leahy (D), Senator Bernie Sanders (I) and Congressman Peter Welch (D) Thursday said the selection of Middlebury College and Norwich University to compete in Solar Decathlon 2013, accounting for ten percent of the entire field of 20 schools selected by the U.S. Department of Energy, burnishes Vermont's already prominent place on the renewable energy map.

The 20 teams from colleges and universities across the United States and from around the world will now begin a two-year process to build solar-powered, highly energy-efficient homes that combine affordability, consumer appeal and design excellence. Throughout the two-year process, the teams will design, build and test their homes before reassembling them at the Solar Decathlon 2013 competition site, in Orange County, Calif. As part of the Solar Decathlon, teams compete in ten different categories, ranging from best architecture and engineering to energy production for heating and cooling, while gaining invaluable real-world experience in a growing global industry.

Last year, Middlebury College was the first Vermont school to compete in the Solar Decathlon. Using local Vermont products and a New England farmhouse design, Middlebury came in fourth out of 19 schools in the 2011 Decathlon and was also the first school without an engineering or architecture department to compete on its own.

Also announced Thursday was the news that the competition will be moved from the National Mall in Washington, D.C. -- where it has been held since 2002 -- to the Orange County Great Park in Irvine, Calif., where the 20 student teams in the fall of 2013 will showcase their solar-powered houses, highlighting renewable energy systems and energy-efficient technologies, products and appliances that are already available to homeowners.

Leahy said, "Vermonters are proud of Middlebury and Norwich and to be home to such strong contenders. It is a testament to the strength of these schools that their designs were chosen to compete against teams from around the world. Vermont's innovators already are helping to shape America's energy future. We wish them luck and all of us in the Green Mountain State will be closely following their progress."

Sanders said, "I congratulate Middlebury College and Norwich University on being selected by the Department of Energy as two of the 20 competitors in the 2013 Solar Decathlon. This competition challenges students to build attractive and energy-efficient solar homes that demonstrate that solar energy is affordable and practical. Middlebury students did a great job constructing a solar home to compete in this competition last year, and I look forward to both the Middlebury and Norwich entries in 2013."

Welch said, "Vermont schools like Middlebury and Norwich are leading the effort to find pragmatic, affordable ways to reduce energy use and save people money. As we work to chart a new energy future, one thing we can all agree on is that using less energy is a good place to start. Efforts like the solar decathlon are integral as we work to make progress. Congratulations to both schools and I wish them the best of luck."